

Smarter Balanced Assessment Team

For more information or to be added to the newsletter distribution list, please contact:

Linda Moreno
Assessment Coordinator for
Special Populations
802-479-1309

Linda.Moreno@vermont.gov

VT AOE Weekly Field Memo
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Questions?

Please contact:

Help Desk (AIR) for Test
Administration & Test Delivery
Technologies
vthelpdesk@air.org
844-218-1184

Michael Hock (AOE) for
Policies and Procedures
Michael.Hock@vermont.gov
802-479-1288

Linda Moreno for
Accessibility and
Accommodations
Linda.Moreno@vermont.gov
802-479-1309

Gabriel McGann for
Science & PE Assessments,
Exemptions & Appeals
Gabriel.McGann@vermont.gov
802-479-1444

Goma Mabika
NAEP
goma.mabika@vermont.gov
802-479-1366



Message from the Director:

From the Test Director: When the data speak, listen!

On Tuesday morning, we learned that Secretary Rebecca Holcombe resigned from her position here at the Agency of Education. Without fear of contradiction, I can say that the AOE staff is uniformly fond of Rebecca, a fondness that is engendered by her skill, wit, intellect, courage and her respectful and caring leadership.

Going back to Rebecca's first days here at the AOE, I can tell you exactly when I knew she was going to be a test director's dream boss. Rebecca and the other Chief State School Officers from around the country were called to a meeting in Washington that featured a speech by then Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. He spent part of that speech extolling the virtues of the school turn around initiative he led when he was Superintendent of Schools in Chicago. At the end, when he entertained some audience questions, Rebecca, this brand new education secretary from a tiny New England state, raised her hand and asked the United States Secretary of Education something on the order of, "Can we see your data?"

When this story was reported back to us, I was jubilant: "My new boss requires data," I thought, "and data gathering is just exactly what I do." Of course, the jubilation did not come without its eventual challenges. Rebecca concentrated on assessment during her doctoral program at Harvard and came away with a balanced sense of how testing can be a positive force in school improvement, and how its misuses and misinterpretations can move us in the opposite direction. She pushed us to fix the bad things, many of them deeply embedded in past practice and federal law, while promoting the notion that when done well, testing is good and necessary. "Without these assessments," she wrote, "any inequities are hidden, and thus likely to be left unaddressed."

It has been my great pleasure to serve on Rebecca's team.

Michael Hock
State Assessment Director

Vermont Science Assessment (VTSA)

New Science Test Window May 1 through 25

We heard from several school leaders, particularly some from independent schools that close at the end of May, that they would prefer to schedule science testing earlier in May. We contacted our team at AIR, and they were able to make this adjustment. The new test window actually has three more days than the original window. We hope this helps schools find a convenient way to schedule the science test around year-end activities.

Accommodations Uploads

As of Friday, March 30th, Test Coordinators will be able to upload accommodations for science. Please remember, with few exceptions, anything available on the Smarter Balanced assessment, accommodation or designated support, will be available on the VTSA.

Alternate ELA, Math and Science Assessments

Early last summer, Vermont ended its relationship with the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment Consortium. Since then the assessment team has been working on developing a new alternate assessment and finding a contractor to develop and implement the alternate assessment program. Unfortunately that effort will not be completed in time for testing this spring, so we are now preparing a one-time place holder for this May that we are trying to make as teacher and student friendly as possible. We are currently drafting a letter, due to come out early next week, that will provide key dates and details, but for now here is some information we can share:

- Schools will be asked to submit teacher assessments of student performance in English Language Arts, Math and Science: these may include IEP progress indicators, progress reports, report cards or other performance indicators that may come from either special education or the regular classroom.
- Preference will be for existing evidence rather than something prepared specifically for the ALT.
- Schools will also be asked to submit one work sample for each content area that demonstrates the student's current levels of performance.
- The Window for submission will close on June 15, 2018, which is also the last day of the Smarter Balanced Assessment window.

Please save questions until after you have reviewed information in the detailed letter.

VT PE Assessment (VTPEA)

Brockport Companion Regional On-site Trainings: [Rescheduled](#)

Wednesday, April 4, 2018– Hartford High School 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

If you were not able to attend the previous session, please feel free to register for the April 4th session. To register, please complete and submit this [form](#). There are approximately 25 spaces left and acceptance is on a first-come first-served basis.

The Brockport power point, from the March 12th session at CVU, will be available on the [VTCAP Portal](#) by Friday, March 30th.

Smarter Balanced

Grade 9 Practice Test

Those of you who are testing 9th grade students have probably noticed that there is no practice or training test available at that level. Unfortunately, at least for now, Vermont is the only state that is testing 9th graders and therefore, it was not fiscally feasible for Smarter Balanced to create an additional practice and/or training test. The training tests are provided to help students become familiar with the system, functionality, and item types, and are arranged in grade level bands. The practice tests are designed to mirror the Smarter Balanced summative assessments in English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics, and are organized by grade level; however, teachers can select the grade. So that we can avoid frustrating or discouraging students with very difficult test content, we encourage you to use the grade 8 practice or training test for 9th graders. You have the option to select the grade 8 practice test or 11th grade practice test, depending on your students' abilities, but keep in mind that the 11th grade practice test may include content from courses your students may have not completed.

Online Reporting System (ORS): ORS is Open

Now that we are more than 10 days into the Smarter Balanced testing window, the Online Reporting System is now open, and schools who chose to test early should start finding their students' results. Please recall that we have an incremental policy for releasing test results. As soon as you have individual student results, you may use them for internal uses. For example, scores may be used to qualify students for special programs such as the gifted summer program offered by Johns-Hopkins. Some schools have also used results to reward students for test participation or showing improvement over previous years. They may also be shared with individual parents. However, to be fair to schools that test later in the testing window, public reporting of group scores is embargoed until after the assessment window closes on June 15th, and at that point should be treated as preliminary data. In mid-summer, when our data team is able to reconcile the test results with spring census data, the Agency will post final results on its website and hold a press release on a date to be determined.

Exemptions

Medical Exemptions

Please make sure you are marking all applicable assessments when requesting an exemption. If approved, students will only be exempt from the tests you indicate on the request.

English Learner (EL) Exemption

This is a reminder that ELs are only exempt from the ELA portion of the Smarter Balanced Assessment in their first year of enrollment in a U.S. school. ELs are not exempt from the Smarter Balanced Math or Science assessment. If the student has entered the U.S. numerous times, each period of time spent in a US school can add up to no more than a year. Additionally, the EL exemption can only be used once per student.

**From the Inbox:**

From: A Literacy Coach

To: Hock, Michael <Michael.Hock@vermont.gov>

Subject: Scoring Question SBAC

Michael,

I have teachers here that are wondering how the writing portions of the SBAC (English CAT and Performance Task) are scored. Are they scored by computer, humans, or both?

Thanks for your help!

Michael's Response:

The answer is both. There are a number of reasons why we want to use machine scoring as much as possible on our digital tests. Foremost is that we can get scores back to schools very quickly when we don't need to use human scoring. However, early on in the Smarter Balanced project, we made a commitment to ensuring that we would only use machine scoring when it could be demonstrated that the computers' accuracy was comparable to that of human scorers. To meet that commitment, during the first administration of Smarter Balanced, 100% of the constructed response test items were scored by humans. So that we could explore the comparability question, we also machine scored about 20% of those items. During the second administration of the test, we switched things around. We maintained human scoring for all items that didn't meet the comparability criteria, machine scored the items that produced comparable scores, and had humans re-score about 20% of those items. Based on what we learned from that process, we are now reasonably confident that we have a good balance of human and machine scoring. This year, across all four parts of the Smarter Balanced test, roughly, three-quarters of the items are machine scored, and the rest are scored by humans. Nearly all of the human scored items come from the writing section of the test, most notably the long essay.

Digital Library**Save the Date: Summer SNE Workshop**

The summer SNE workshop will be held in Chicago, IL from July 16-18, 2018. In order to be considered, you will need to request an invitation. The link for the invitation is available on the flier under the [Digital Library Workshop card](#). All SNEs will need to train or re-train prior to attending this workshop. More information on the training will follow. Vermont will start with nine slots, four of which we would like to extend to new educators. The Digital Library is also looking for Special Education and ESL teachers to assist in this work. Please contact Linda Moreno at 802-479-1309 or linda.moreno@vermont.gov if you have any questions.

Digital Library (cont.)**Webinar: Learn How to Make Your Digital Library Resources POP!**

Whether you're new to creating digital images or you just want to pick up some additional tips from the Smarter Balanced Communications Team, you're invited to join us for this [SNE Training Webinar](#). During this one-hour webinar, participants will learn:

- How to **create** copyright-free and visually appealing digital images for the Digital Library resources,
- about **free tools** and resources for creating high quality resources card images and,
- how to leverage their new skills into a potential SNE **contract opportunity**.

When:

Wednesday, April 18, 2018

3:00pm – 4:00pm Pacific Daylight Time (6:00-7:00 pm EDT)

[Register](#)

Educator Opportunities: [Free Online Course for Teachers](#)

Stanford University is now offering a free, online professional development course that focuses on supporting student argumentation in English Language Arts and Social Studies. We encourage our members to communicate this opportunity to teachers working with English language learners in their state. More information about the course and registration is available here: <https://lagunita.stanford.edu/courses/course-v1:Education+XEDUC205+Spring2018/about>. Please feel free to contact Linda Moreno at linda.moreno@vermont.gov or 802-479-1309 if you have any questions.

**Question of the week**

Is there a training for Scribes, and where can I find the Confidentiality Agreement?

A: There is no specific training for Scribes that the AOE has produced. Smarter Balanced has published very specific protocols for scribing that can be found in [Appendix E](#) of the Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines (UAAG). As for a [Confidentiality Agreement](#), the AOE has a template that is available in the VTCAP Portal, but districts may also have their own forms. Please check with your District Test Administrators to make sure you are using the correct form.